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step 26 (inspection). The semiconductor device is completed through these steps and then is shipped (step 27).--

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Please substitute the paragraph beginning at page 30, line 14, with the following. A marked-up copy of this paragraph, showing the changes made thereto, is attached in Appendix A.

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--Thus, in accordance with the present invention as described above, a gas for raising oxygen concentration is blown in when maintenance is applied to an area in which oxygen concentration is set to a low value or to an area in which a toxic gas such as ozone, which is harmful to the human body, is produced. Furthermore, the oxygen concentration is sensed and maintenance is performed after the results of sensing indicate that a safe level of oxygen concentration has been attained. This makes it possible to assure worker safety in the maintenance area and allows maintenance work to be performed safely at all times. In addition, maintenance can be performed in a shorter period of time and the efficiency of maintenance can be improved. --

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IN THE CLAIMS:

Please ~~CANCEL~~ ✓ claims 2 and 17, without prejudice to or disclaimer of the recited subject matter recited therein.

Please AMEND claims 1, 16, and 18, as follows. A marked-up copy of the amended claims, showing the changes made thereto, is attached in Appendix A. For the Examiner's convenience, all claims currently under consideration in this application have been reproduced below:

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1. (Amended) A semiconductor manufacturing apparatus comprising:  
purging means for purging inert gas in an area inside a chamber;  
decision means for deciding start of a maintenance operation inside the chamber;  
and  
supply means for supplying a prescribed area inside the chamber with clean, dry air, if the start of the maintenance operation has been decided by said decision means.

3. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising an open/close sensor for sensing opening and closing of a panel provided in an outer wall of the chamber;  
wherein said decision means decides start of the maintenance operation if said open/close sensor senses that the panel has been opened.

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16. (Amended) A method of controlling a semiconductor manufacturing apparatus, comprising:  
a purging step of purging inert gas in an area inside a chamber;

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